

of successive rounds. In other words, the claim is reciting two distinct sets of plural successive rounds.

The rejection appears to be based upon an interpretation that the first three rounds and the last three rounds collectively are successive rounds. It is respectfully submitted that this is not a correct reading of the claim. Rather, as pointed out above, the claim recites two distinct sets of rounds, each of which constitutes a plurality of successive rounds.

It is respectfully submitted that claims 27 and 34 are fully consistent with their respective parent claims, as well as with the disclosure relating to the DES algorithm. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 24-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103, on the grounds that they were considered to be unpatentable over the previously-cited Kocher et al. patent (US 6,278,783) in view of the newly-cited Ohki et al. patent (US 6,615,354). It is noted that the Ohki patent has an effective U.S. filing date of December 10, 1999. The present application claims priority to a French application that was filed on February 17, 1999. A certified copy of the French priority application was filed during the international phase of the present application, and receipt of the priority document was acknowledged in the Notice of Acceptance dated May 19, 2003. It is respectfully submitted that the Ohki patent does not qualify as prior art against the present application. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

BUCHANAN INGERSOLL & ROONEY PC

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By:



James A. LaBarre
Registration No. 28632

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, VA 22313-1404
703 836 6620